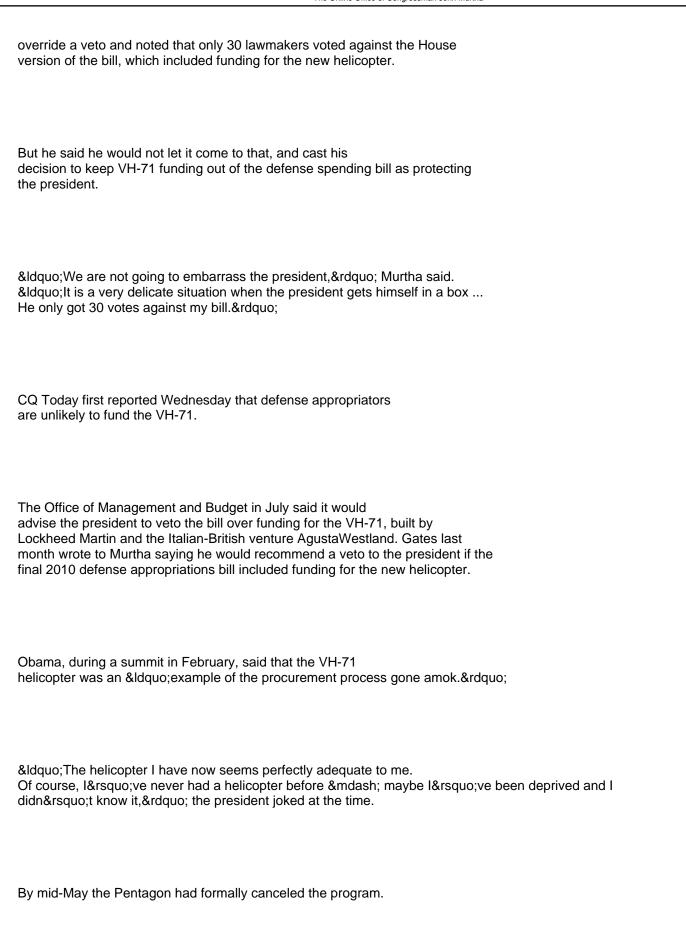
November 5, 2009 - Defense Appropriator Comes Under Pressure to Nix Funding for Helicopter

The Hill
www.thehill.com
Defense appropriator comes under pressure to nix funding for helicopter
By Roxana Tiron
November 5, 2009
Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) on Wednesday said several administration
officials and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) have pressured him not to fund a new presidential helicopter.
Murtha, the senior defense appropriator in the House, told The Hill that he has been receiving "clear" signals from Pelosi, National
Security Adviser Jim Jones and Defense Secretary Robert Gates that President Barack Obama won't sign the 2010 Pentagon appropriations bill if it contains
money for the now-defunct VH-71 presidential helicopter.
The administration has also issued a veto threat over the
funding. Obama has not personally threatened to veto the helicopter, but has made it clear he doesn't want it.

http://www.murtha.house.gov Powered by Joomla! Generated: 5 January, 2010, 14:11

Murtha suggested Congress could probably find the votes to



The helicopter program has suffered from delays and ballooning costs; its price tag rose from an estimated \$6.5 billion to \$13 billion, in part because of growing technological requirements from the Marine One Squadron, which flies the presidential helicopters.

http://www.murtha.house.gov Powered by Joomla! Generated: 5 January, 2010, 14:11

Murtha and several other lawmakers, including Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.), whose district houses the Lockheed plant, have argued that starting another new helicopter program would be even more expensive and take a longer time than continuing a scaled-down version of the VH-71. Lockheed Martin announced it would lay off 600 employees as a result of the cancellation of the helicopter program.

House defense appropriators have been looking for a way to tap into the \$3.2 billion already spent on the program. For 2010 they allocated \$485 million to make operational five VH-71 helicopters that have already been delivered. The Senate did not include any funds to continue the work on the VH-71, but included \$30 million for the development phase of a follow-on chopper.

The Obama administration has said that whatever the replacement for the decades-old Marine One helicopters will be, it would be cheaper and fly longer than the VH-71.

Murtha said on Wednesday that he was still looking for ways to save some of the VH-71 technologies, "but we are not there yet."

&Idquo;It's a problem working it out with the White House," he added.

Meanwhile, Murtha said that he hoped the conference report on the defense appropriations bill would get a vote by Thanksgiving but indicated that vote could easily slip into December. He said that the House and Senate committees have already informally negotiated the bill and would be ready to bring it up for a vote in a matter of seven days.

http://www.murtha.house.gov Powered by Joomla! Generated: 5 January, 2010, 14:11